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ABSTRACT

Young Americans are killed with guns at rates far higher than young people in other countries and than older Americans, with young, urban African-American males being most at risk. This fact sheet presents data on gun-related homicides among teenagers in the United States. The high rate of youth homicide in the United States is unique in the industrialized world, a rate which has increased alarmingly in recent years. Statistics are provided for gun homicides among young black males, a group for whom shootings are the leading cause of death. The document includes two figures on international homicide rates and homicide rate in the United States by age, race, and sex. (RB)

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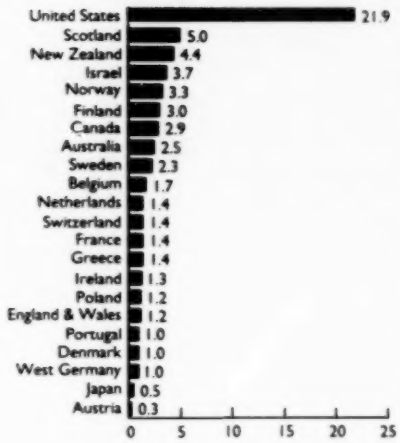
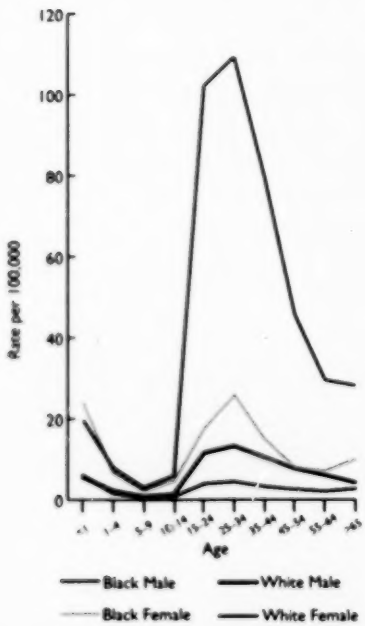
Firearm Facts

YOUTH HOMICIDE AND GUNS



International homicide rates for males 15–24 years old, per 100,000, 1986 and 1987 *(Fingerhut, 1990, JAMA)*



Homicide rate by age, race, and sex, U.S., 1988 *(Hammett et al, 1992, MMWR)*

Young Americans are killed with guns at rates far higher than young people in other countries and than older Americans. More teenagers are murdered with guns now than ever before. Young, urban African-American males are most at risk. Spontaneous violence among young people can turn deadly if a gun is available.

In 1987, 1,300 males under the age of 19 were murdered with guns in the United States.[1] In the same time period, in Canada, Japan, France, West Germany, Australia, England, Wales and Sweden combined, fewer than 80 males under the age of 19 were murdered with guns.[2]
America's rate of firearms homicide is unique in the industrialized world. No other country tolerates such a high rate of youth homicide.

If all Americans were shot and killed at the same rate as young black males, 260,000 Americans would be murdered with guns each year.[3]
Currently, 15,000 Americans are murdered with guns each year.[7]

In the United States in 1990, 2,861 children 19 years and under were murdered with guns, an increase of 114% since 1985.[5]
Teens are killing each other; most crimes against teenagers are committed by teenagers.[2,6]

Firearms are used in over 80% of teenage homicides and approximately 68% of homicides for all ages.[5,7]
Many teenage homicides are spontaneous. Firearms are easily available and easy to use, allowing petty arguments to end tragically.

The firearm homicide rate for 15–19 year olds increased 61% from 1979 through 1989.[8] The rate for homicide by all other methods remained stable or decreased.[8]

Nationally, gun homicide has been the leading cause of death for young black males ages 15–19 since 1969.[9]
In 1988, black males ages 15–24 were three times more likely to die of a gunshot wound than from all natural causes combined.[10]

In one U.S. city, over half of all male 11th graders surveyed said that they could easily obtain a handgun. Nine percent of these students said they had shot at another person.[11]
Many of these children are not old enough to get a driver's license, but they can get a handgun.

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